

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) – The Pentagon still reportedly has plans to build up its U.S. military presence in the Middle East, Fox News reported, citing two U.S. officials familiar with the matter. The Wall Street Journal broke the news, citing sources that the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) was considering to authorize the deployment of additional 14,000 troops to the Middle East along with various military hardware. According to the sources, Defense Secretary Mark Esper has "not made any decision" but the plan reportedly envisages the deployment of up to 7,000 additional soldiers to the Middle East.

If the right usurped from us is given back to us we shall take it, otherwise we shall go on claiming it.

Amir al-Momeneen Ali (AS)

Yemeni Air Forces Shoot Down Saudi Spy Drones

Palestinians Resume Weekly Anti-Zionist Protests in Gaza



Palestinian men carry an injured man during a protest on November 16, 2018, on the eastern outskirts of Gaza City.

GAZA (Dispatches) – **Palestinians resumed on Friday their weekly anti-Zionist protests known as the Great March of Return which had stopped for three weeks, according to the commission in charge of the protests.**

In the eastern Gaza Strip, hundreds of protesters gathered in the afternoon in five different spots along the Gaza fence, waving Palestinian flags and chanting anti-Zionist slogans.

Eyewitnesses said several demonstrators cut the barbed wire of the fence, while dozens threw stones at the Zionist troops stationed there.

The Zionist troops fired tear gas canisters and rubber bullets to disperse the crowds and prevent them from reaching the fence, injuring dozens, they added.

The health ministry in Gaza said at least 313 Palestinians have been shot dead and more than 19,000 others injured by Zionist troops' live ammunition since the weekly protests started in late March last year.

In another development, Zionist police on Friday detained four journalists from the Palestinian Authority's official television station in al-Quds, drawing protest from Palestinians who say their activities in the holy city are increasingly restricted.

The Palestine TV crew was filming a talk show outside of al-Quds' walled Old City when Zionist officers detained them and took their equipment, the Authority's Wafa news service said.

The journalists with the daily "Good Morning Jerusalem (al-Quds)" program were held for four hours at a police station in al-Quds and later released, said Mohammad Barghouti, Palestine TV's general manager for news.

Zionist regime police spokesman Micky Rosenfeld said: "The journalists were detained in connection with illegal activity by (the) Palestinian Authority in Jerusalem."

The Zionist regime forbids any official activity in al-Quds by the PA.

Mortars Hit Iraqi Base Housing U.S. Troops

TIKRIT (Dispatches) – **Two mortars have landed inside Iraq's Balad air base that hosts U.S. forces and contractors north of Baghdad, two Iraqi military sources said.**

No casualties have been reported in the mortar attack against the air base, said the sources.

A statement by Iraq's security media center said the attack on Balad Air Base, located about 80 kilometers (50 miles) north of Baghdad, took place late on Thursday.

The development came only two days after the U.S.-led coalition announced that several rockets had landed outside Ain al-Asad Air Base, where hundreds of U.S. troops are stationed in Iraq's western province of Anbar.

Col. Myles B. Caggins III, the spokesman for the so-called Operation Inherent Resolve, said in a statement that no facilities were hit and there were no injuries.

Reuters news agency, citing an Iraqi military statement, reported that five rockets had landed in the sprawling airbase.

U.S. Vice President Mike Pence paid an unannounced visit to the airbase on November 23 to meet with U.S. troops there.

U.S. Base in Syria's SE Attacked

In another development, a U.S. military base at al-Omar oil field in the southeastern Syrian province of Dayr al-Zawr was attacked by unknown assailants on Friday, Al-Ikhbariya broadcaster reported.

The attack coincided with the arrival of trucks with military equipment at the base, according to the broadcaster. U.S. troops reportedly responded with shelling and stun grenades.

U.S. Defense Secretary Mark Esper said earlier in the week that U.S. troops in northeastern Syria had finished re-manoeuvring as needed and that the total number of troops on the ground would remain at around 600.

The movement of U.S. forces has been causing much uncertainty in Syria since U.S. President Donald Trump abruptly announced a withdrawal of troops in early October. The pullout was never complete, however, with the troops eventually setting up a camp at Syrian oil fields controlled by allied Kurds, claiming to ensure that resources were not taken by Daesh.



This undated picture shows the wreckage of an unmanned aerial vehicle belonging to the Saudi military after it was intercepted and targeted by Yemeni forces.

SANAA (Dispatches) – **Yemeni forces have intercepted and shot down three surveillance drone belonging to the Saudi military coalition, flying in the skies over the border of the southwestern Saudi region of Jizan in two days.**

The third unmanned aerial vehicle was downed with a precision-guided missile over the Jahfan area of the region on Thursday, the Arabic-language al-Masirah

television network said. The spokesman for Yemeni Armed Forces, Brigadier General Yahya Saree, earlier said in a statement that Yemeni forces and their allies shot down Saudi reconnaissance spy drones on Wednesday.

"One spy drone was shot down near the border of the southwestern Saudi region of Jizan, while the other drone was

downed near the southern Saudi region of Asir," the statement read.

The operations were the latest in Yemen's retaliatory attacks against Saudi Arabia over its war on the impoverished country.

A Yemeni maritime official said the Saudi-led coalition impounded more than a dozen ships carrying energy derivatives and food destined for the con-

flict-plagued and impoverished Arab country, despite the fact the vessels had earlier acquired necessary permits from the United Nations.

The unnamed official at Hudaydah port told Arabic-language al-Masirah television network on Wednesday that 13 ships have been marooned at the port of Jizan in southwestern Saudi Arabia.

He added that the vessels had undergone inspection by the United Nations and obtained the relevant papers.

In another development on the country, Sudan's new Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok vowed to withdraw troops from the Saudi-led war in Yemen, saying his country's role should be limited to assisting in a political resolution of the conflict.

"The conflict in Yemen has no military solution, whether from us or from anywhere in the world," Hamdok told the Atlantic Council, a U.S.-based think tank, on Thursday.

He added that the war "has to be resolved through political means," and that his country will seek to "help our brothers and sisters in Yemen and play our role with the rest to help them address this".

Sudan has been one of the main contributors to the so-called Saudi coalition against Yemen, formed in 2015 in a bid to install a pro-Saudi government in Sana'a and crush Yemen's Houthi Ansarallah movement.

According to reports, up to 40,000 Sudanese troops were deployed in the country during the peak of the conflict in 2016-2017.

'U.S. Forces Transfer Daesh Families From Syria to Iraq'

BAGHDAD (Press TV) – **U.S. military forces have transported to safe sanctuaries hundreds of family members of the Daesh terrorists from Syria's northeastern province of Hasakah to neighboring Iraq, a local media report says.**

Syria's official news agency SANA, citing local sources, reported on Thursday that American forces transported more than 600 children and women of the Daesh terrorists to an unknown location.

The Daesh members were being kept at al-Hol refugee camp, which lies close to the Syria-Iraq border and is run by the Kurdish-dominated SDF militants.

The report said five military vehicles and about 30 U.S. soldiers entered from Iraq to the Syrian Hasaka Province as they positioned in the illegitimate airport of Khrab al-Jeer.

In recent months, U.S. forces have transported hundreds of Daesh extremists and their relatives from Syrian territories to Iraq in a number of batches.

In addition, U.S. forces have until recently been airlifting Daesh terrorists from one place in Syria to another, under the cover of darkness, in order to save them in the face of advancement and territorial gains by Syrian government

forces, and prevent revelation of their alliance with the terrorists.

Turkey and its allied militants have launched a ground offensive against Kurdish forces in northeastern Syria.

Elsewhere in the report, SANA said a convoy of military vehicles of the Turkish forces entered the northern countryside of al-Hasakah from the key border town of Ra's al-Ayn. The convoy included three tanks, five military jeeps, four soldier carriers and four armored vehicles.

Turkish forces and Ankara-backed fighters have reportedly turned many schools, public fa-

ilities and cultural into military headquarters in the troubled region.

Last month, media reports said that Turkish army troops had begun setting up a military base in Hasakah, weeks after they launched a cross-border incursion, backed by allied militants, against members of the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG).

On October 9, Turkish military forces and Ankara-backed militants launched a long-threatened cross-border invasion of northeastern Syria in a declared attempt to push YPG militants from border areas.

Lebanon Appeals for Import Aid as Crisis Deepens

BEIRUT (Dispatches) – **Lebanon says it has asked friendly states to help finance imports of essential goods, as sources say France is planning an international meeting to mobilize support for its former colony's deep economic crisis.**

Caretaker Prime Minister Saad al-Hariri said on Friday that his office had sent an appeal for assistance in securing credit for imports of food and raw materials for manufacturing.

The appeal was sent to Saudi Arabia, France, Russia, Turkey, the United States, China, and Egypt, Hariri said in a statement.

Lebanon is grappling with the worst financial strains since its 1975-1990 civil war.

Saad al-Hariri resigned as prime minister on October 29 under pressure from protesters, who accuse the ruling elite of pushing Lebanon towards political turmoil at a time of acute economic crisis.

Hariri said at the time that he had reached a "dead end" in trying to resolve the economic

crisis, which has been further complicated by violence on the streets.

Amid progress in talks on forming a new cabinet, fresh clashes erupted between police and anti-government protesters in the Lebanese capital city of Beirut on Wednesday.

The protests broke out in Lebanon on October 17, when the government introduced a set of economic austerity measures.

Lebanese President Michel Aoun says carrying out essential reforms and fighting corruption in the country will be among the new government's top priorities.

The new government will be formed quickly and its priorities will include "achieving the essential reforms in different sectors" and fighting corruption, Aoun said on Thursday during a meeting with heads of professional syndicates.

Currently, Lebanese political parties are engaged in negotiations to resolve the cabinet

crisis.

Hariri, who is still serving in a caretaker capacity, told reporters on Tuesday that he backed Lebanese businessman Samir al-Khatib to head the next cabinet, adding, however, that "some details" still had to be hashed out.

Hariri also said that he would not take part in the new Lebanese government.

Khatib is an executive vice president of Khatib & Alami engineering company.

He reportedly met Lebanon's caretaker foreign minister, Gebran Bassil, at the Foreign Ministry on Tuesday after holding talks with President Aoun at Baabda Palace to gain their support for the premiership.

A source familiar with the cabinet formation process said Khatib was seeking to promote a 24-member techno-political administration, which would also include representatives of Lebanese protesters, The Daily Star newspaper reported.